

**Submission  
No 18**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF DRUG  
REHABILITATION SERVICES IN REGIONAL, RURAL AND  
REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Public Health Association of Australia

**Date received:** 8 December 2017

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Portfolio Committee No. 2

NSW Legislative Council

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## The provision of drug rehabilitation services in regional, rural and remote New South Wales

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), as the leading national peak body for public health representation and advocacy, works to promote the health and well-being of all Australians. The PHAA believes that health is a human right, a vital resource for everyday life, and key factor in sustainability. Health equity and inequity do not exist in isolation from the conditions that underpin people's health.

The health status of all people is impacted by the social, cultural, political, environmental and economic determinants of health. Specific focus on these determinants is necessary to reduce the unfair and unjust effects of conditions of living that cause poor health and disease. These determinants underpin the strategic direction of the Association.

With the number of people in New South Wales receiving treatment for alcohol and other drug issues numbering in the tens of thousands every year,<sup>1</sup> the provision of services is essential. A key factor in addressing health equity in this area is ensuring that sufficient services are available in regional, rural and remote areas of New South Wales.

PHAA supports the recommendations in the submission to this Inquiry from the Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies (NADA). In particular, PHAA supports the recommendations to:

1. Increase funding to residential beds in regional, rural and remote NSW to address bed shortages
2. To establish a comprehensive Alcohol and Other Drug workforce development strategy to address workforce challenges.

PHAA also emphasises the need for culturally safe services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. With rates of risky alcohol consumption among Indigenous communities in New South Wales being higher in remote than non-remote areas,<sup>2</sup> the need for culturally safe AOD services in regional, rural and remote areas is particularly pertinent.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017) Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia: state and territory summaries. Drug Treatment Series Number 29. Cat. no. HSE 187. Canberra: AIHW

<sup>2</sup> AIHW (2017) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 report: New South Wales. Cat. no. IHW 182. Canberra: AIHW

Finally, as noted in the 2015 New South Wales Department of Health Evidence Check Review, comorbid issues of mental health and alcohol and other drug use require specific models of care.<sup>3</sup> The results of the current inquiry must ensure that these services are enhanced throughout regional, rural and remote New South Wales.

PHAA appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the review of the provision of drug rehabilitation services in regional, rural and remote New South Wales. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require additional information or have any queries in relation to this submission.

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<sup>3</sup> NSW Ministry of Health (2015) Effective models of care for comorbid mental illness and illicit substance use: Evidence Check Review. Sydney: Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office.